

DTSC's response to fire at Chevron Refinery/Richmond August 2012

DTSC recognizes that community members are looking to government agencies for answers to their concerns about the recent fire at the Chevron Refinery in Richmond. Collectively and individually, our job as public servants is to protect people's health and their environment.

Contra Costa County and the City of Richmond have experienced and skilled staff overseeing the incident and the regulatory authority to do so. DTSC is working in support of these and other local governments, and will invoke our authority when it is warranted. We regulate a hazardous waste storage area at the facility. This storage area is not within the active refinery and was not near or affected by the fire. Our inspectors have been to the site and are evaluating these hazardous waste operations.

It may take several days to identify the exact series of events that led to the leak and subsequent fire but we will do everything we can to participate in efforts to find and communicate answers to the community, and support the local agencies as they identify safeguards that prevent future incidents.

While we do not have legal authority to oversee the refinery's production area, Contra Costa County, which does have oversight, ultimately would decide if Chevron failed to operate the facility in a way that could have prevented the fire.

Our goal now is to identify ways to improve the prevention and response effort. We are participating in the County-led multi-agency response group to evaluate events at the facility, governmental response to the incident and how to better prevent these incidents from occurring in the future. We will post additional information and links as they become available.